

2018-19 Compensation for Graduate Assistants
FINANCE AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

February 2, 2018

Background

Graduate students who work as graduate assistants while pursuing their master's or doctoral degrees provide a valuable service to the university. Many teach undergraduate classes while others support faculty in scholarly and sponsored research activities. To be competitive in the recruitment and retention of high quality graduate students, it is important for the university to provide compensation packages that are comparable with those offered by peer institutions. The key components of the total compensation package are a stipend, tuition assistance, and health insurance benefit.

Graduate Stipends

One of the primary goals of Virginia Tech during the 1980's was to build a graduate compensation program that was competitive with those offered by comparable institutions. Across the campus, graduate assistants have a variety of responsibilities. To recognize the differences in services performed by these students, the university created a stipend scale that defines ranges of stipend amounts, providing academic and administrative unit's flexibility in compensating graduate assistants. The levels within the stipend table have been adjusted over the years to remain competitive.

To respond to increasing competition for quality graduate students among peer institutions, the graduate student stipend scale was revised for Fall 2003 and approved by the Board of Visitors. The revision better positioned Virginia Tech departments as compared to their national peers and reflected the minimum stipend levels authorized by the National Science Foundation at the time. The Fall 2004 stipend scale added 10 additional stipend steps, numbered 41-50, to increase the university's competitive position in attracting outstanding Ph.D. students. In 2004-05, the graduate stipend scale was enhanced to function as 50 pay ranges (Attachment). These ranges provide flexibility in situations where a defined level of resources does not exactly match one of the existing steps, and allow for an actual stipend to be established within the range of a step.

In 2011-12, an academic year fixed dollar supplement was added to the graduate stipend scale to help offset university assigned costs such as the health fee. As a result, the graduate assistant stipend is currently comprised of two components: 1) a base stipend and 2) a fixed supplement. For administrative efficiency and processing, the two components are combined into the traditional stipend scale. As of January 25, 2018, the

current average monthly stipend for full-time graduate assistants is \$2,026 per month, which falls within step 12 of the 2017-18 stipend scale.

Tuition Assistance

In the 1990's, the university developed a more comprehensive program of tuition remission for graduate students serving on assistantships. The tuition program is financed by four sources including: the General Fund appropriation for graduate student financial assistance, a tuition remission program in the Educational and General budget, tuition payments planned in the budgets of externally sponsored grants and contracts, and private funds. The tuition remission program for graduate students on assistantship includes the remission of tuition, mandatory E&G fees (excluding the state assigned Commonwealth Capital and Equipment Fee), and non-executive graduate program fees.

Health Insurance

At the March 2001 meeting of the Board of Visitors, a health insurance program for graduate students on assistantship was approved as a part of the graduate student compensation package to enhance the university's competitiveness in recruiting highly qualified graduate students. The program was designed to help full-time graduate students receiving a full or partial assistantship, including graduate research assistants, graduate teaching assistants, and graduate assistants, offset a portion of the cost of health insurance premiums. In 2009-10, university management worked with representatives of the graduate student community to review and improve the overall mix and value of benefits provided through the health insurance program; these enhancements were approved by the Board and included in the program for 2010-11. For the 2017-18 academic year, the Board of Visitors approved a health insurance subsidy rate of 88 percent for graduate assistants, matching the university's share of other employee health insurance programs.

In order to qualify for health insurance, full-time graduate students must have a 50 percent or greater appointment. Graduate students also have the option to decline coverage if they so choose. In 2017-18, the university provided 88 percent of the \$2,924 annual premium cost of the plan to 2,118 graduate students. The plan provided for a \$450 in-network annual deductible, \$5,750 per-person out-of-pocket maximum, \$25 co-pay for in-network doctors' visits, and an unlimited maximum benefit. Students can obtain optional dental benefits for an additional cost.

Proposed Graduate Assistant Compensation Plan for 2018-19

The university proposes the following actions:

- The university proposes to advance the stipend scale for 2018-19 by implementing a 2.0 percent increase, effective November 25th, 2018. This aligns with the university's planned faculty compensation program. In conformity with the treatment of stipend increases in prior years, the university would establish the effective date of the increases as August 10, 2018, annualizing the amount that would otherwise be effective November 25, 2018. This process will result in an overall increase of 1.2 percent in the stipend scale for the 2018-19 academic year. The shift to the beginning of the Fall academic term does not affect the total compensation for the graduate students; rather, it spreads the increase over the entire academic year, and provides the updated stipend scale in advance of the recruitment and contracting of graduate assistants for the fall semester.
- The university proposes continuing the university share of the graduate assistant health insurance coverage at 88 percent, based upon the university's current estimate of a 13 to 16 percent cost increase for graduate student insurance coverage.

RECOMMENDATION

That the graduate assistant compensation program for 2018-19 be approved.

March 25, 2018

2018-19 Full-Time Graduate Monthly Stipend Compensation
Effective August 10, 2018

Step	2018-19			Total Stipend					
	Components			Total Stipend					
	Monthly Base		AY Supplement	Monthly		9 Month		12 Month	
Step 1	\$1,416	- \$1,416	\$400	\$ 1,461	- \$ 1,461	\$ 13,149	- \$ 13,149	\$ 17,532	- \$ 17,532
Step 2	1,417	- 1,473	400	1,462	- 1,517	13,158	- 13,653	17,544	- 18,204
Step 3	1,474	- 1,527	400	1,518	- 1,571	13,662	- 14,139	18,216	- 18,852
Step 4	1,528	- 1,580	400	1,572	- 1,625	14,148	- 14,625	18,864	- 19,500
Step 5	1,582	- 1,635	400	1,627	- 1,679	14,643	- 15,111	19,524	- 20,148
Step 6	1,636	- 1,692	400	1,680	- 1,736	15,120	- 15,624	20,160	- 20,832
Step 7	1,693	- 1,744	400	1,737	- 1,789	15,633	- 16,101	20,844	- 21,468
Step 8	1,745	- 1,801	400	1,790	- 1,845	16,110	- 16,605	21,480	- 22,140
Step 9	1,803	- 1,853	400	1,847	- 1,898	16,623	- 17,082	22,164	- 22,776
Step 10	1,854	- 1,910	400	1,899	- 1,955	17,091	- 17,595	22,788	- 23,460
Step 11	1,911	- 1,962	400	1,956	- 2,006	17,604	- 18,054	23,472	- 24,072
Step 12	1,964	- 2,014	400	2,008	- 2,059	18,072	- 18,531	24,096	- 24,708
Step 13	2,017	- 2,072	400	2,062	- 2,117	18,558	- 19,053	24,744	- 25,404
Step 14	2,073	- 2,126	400	2,118	- 2,170	19,062	- 19,530	25,416	- 26,040
Step 15	2,127	- 2,180	400	2,171	- 2,225	19,539	- 20,025	26,052	- 26,700
Step 16	2,181	- 2,234	400	2,226	- 2,279	20,034	- 20,511	26,712	- 27,348
Step 17	2,235	- 2,289	400	2,280	- 2,333	20,520	- 20,997	27,360	- 27,996
Step 18	2,290	- 2,345	400	2,334	- 2,390	21,006	- 21,510	28,008	- 28,680
Step 19	2,346	- 2,399	400	2,391	- 2,444	21,519	- 21,996	28,692	- 29,328
Step 20	2,400	- 2,453	400	2,445	- 2,497	22,005	- 22,473	29,340	- 29,964
Step 21	2,455	- 2,508	400	2,499	- 2,553	22,491	- 22,977	29,988	- 30,636
Step 22	2,509	- 2,560	400	2,554	- 2,604	22,986	- 23,436	30,648	- 31,248
Step 23	2,561	- 2,616	400	2,605	- 2,660	23,445	- 23,940	31,260	- 31,920
Step 24	2,617	- 2,671	400	2,661	- 2,716	23,949	- 24,444	31,932	- 32,592
Step 25	2,672	- 2,726	400	2,717	- 2,770	24,453	- 24,930	32,604	- 33,240
Step 26	2,727	- 2,779	400	2,771	- 2,823	24,939	- 25,407	33,252	- 33,876
Step 27	2,780	- 2,836	400	2,824	- 2,881	25,416	- 25,929	33,888	- 34,572
Step 28	2,837	- 2,889	400	2,882	- 2,933	25,938	- 26,397	34,584	- 35,196
Step 29	2,890	- 2,943	400	2,934	- 2,987	26,406	- 26,883	35,208	- 35,844
Step 30	2,944	- 2,998	400	2,988	- 3,043	26,892	- 27,387	35,856	- 36,516
Step 31	2,999	- 3,051	400	3,044	- 3,095	27,396	- 27,855	36,528	- 37,140
Step 32	3,052	- 3,106	400	3,096	- 3,150	27,864	- 28,350	37,152	- 37,800
Step 33	3,108	- 3,160	400	3,152	- 3,205	28,368	- 28,845	37,824	- 38,460
Step 34	3,161	- 3,215	400	3,206	- 3,259	28,854	- 29,331	38,472	- 39,108
Step 35	3,216	- 3,269	400	3,260	- 3,313	29,340	- 29,817	39,120	- 39,756
Step 36	3,270	- 3,323	400	3,314	- 3,368	29,826	- 30,312	39,768	- 40,416
Step 37	3,324	- 3,378	400	3,369	- 3,422	30,321	- 30,798	40,428	- 41,064
Step 38	3,379	- 3,433	400	3,423	- 3,477	30,807	- 31,293	41,076	- 41,724
Step 39	3,434	- 3,488	400	3,478	- 3,533	31,302	- 31,797	41,736	- 42,396
Step 40	3,489	- 3,541	400	3,534	- 3,585	31,806	- 32,265	42,408	- 43,020
Step 41	3,542	- 3,599	400	3,586	- 3,643	32,274	- 32,787	43,032	- 43,716
Step 42	3,600	- 3,651	400	3,644	- 3,696	32,796	- 33,264	43,728	- 44,352
Step 43	3,652	- 3,705	400	3,697	- 3,749	33,273	- 33,741	44,364	- 44,988
Step 44	3,706	- 3,760	400	3,750	- 3,805	33,750	- 34,245	45,000	- 45,660
Step 45	3,762	- 3,813	400	3,806	- 3,858	34,254	- 34,722	45,672	- 46,296
Step 46	3,814	- 3,871	400	3,859	- 3,915	34,731	- 35,235	46,308	- 46,980
Step 47	3,873	- 3,922	400	3,917	- 3,967	35,253	- 35,703	47,004	- 47,604
Step 48	3,923	- 3,979	400	3,968	- 4,024	35,712	- 36,216	47,616	- 48,288
Step 49	3,980	- 4,033	400	4,025	- 4,077	36,225	- 36,693	48,300	- 48,924
Step 50	4,034	- 4,087	400	4,078	- 4,132	36,702	- 37,188	48,936	- 49,584

Approval of 2018-19 Compensation for Graduate Assistants

March 25, 2018

**DWIGHT SHELTON,
INTERIM SR. VICE PRESIDENT FOR OPERATIONS AND
ADMINISTRATION**

**TIM HODGE,
ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT FOR BUDGET AND
FINANCIAL PLANNING**



Background

Graduate Assistants provide valuable services to the university, including teaching and support of scholarly and research activities.

Successful recruitment of high quality graduate students requires the university to offer competitive compensation packages.

Components of Total Compensation Package

- Stipend
- Tuition assistance
- Health insurance benefit

Graduate Stipend Components

1. Base stipend scale provides a range of stipend amounts reflective of differing levels of responsibility.
 - Current stipend scale has 50 pay ranges to ensure flexibility to the university programs.
2. Fixed supplement (established in 2011-12 to help offset university assigned costs such as the health fee)

As of January 2018, the current average monthly stipend for full-time graduate assistants is **\$2,026** per month.

Tuition Assistance*: Financed by four sources

1. General Fund appropriation for graduate assistance.
2. Tuition remission program in the Educational and General budget.
3. Tuition payments planned in the budgets of externally sponsored grants and contracts.
4. Private funds.

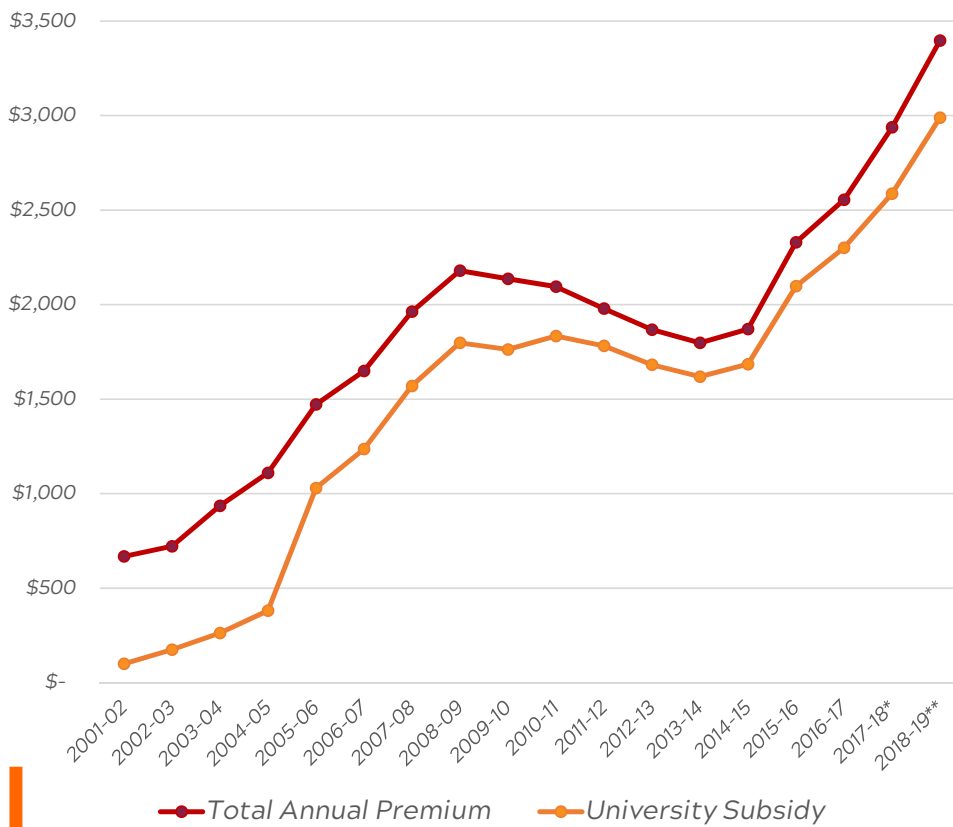
*Includes remission of tuition, mandatory E&G fees, and non-executive graduate program fees.

Health Insurance

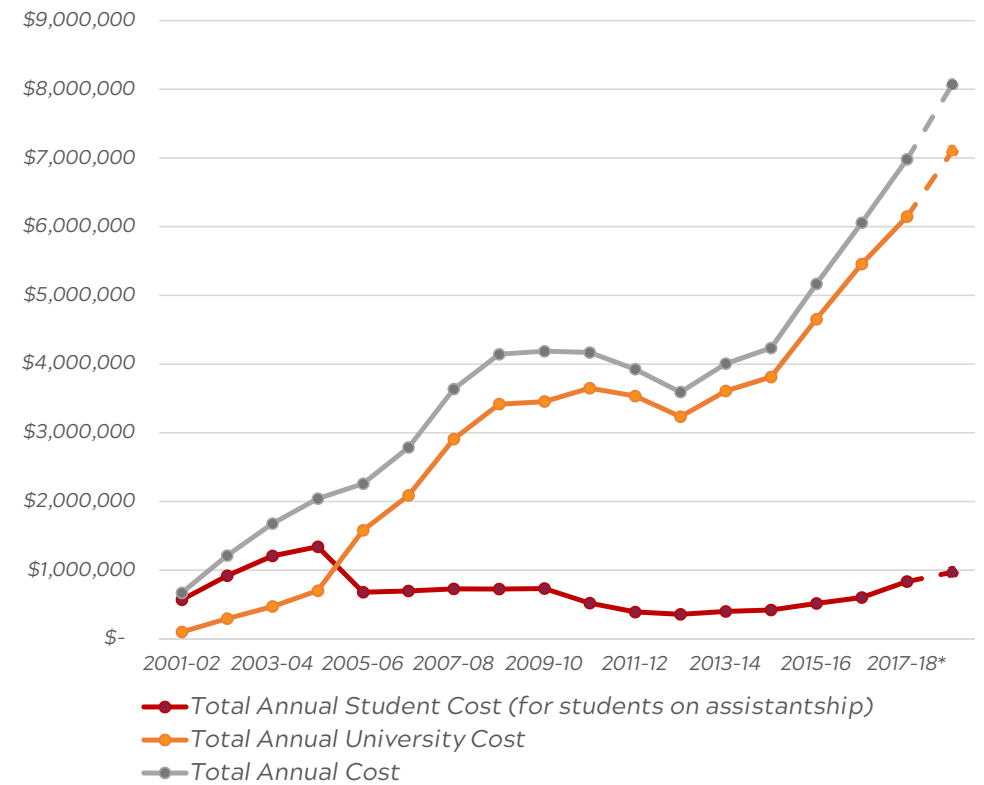
- Health insurance for graduate students on assistantships was established in 2001.
- To qualify, full-time graduate students must have a 50 percent or greater assistantship appointment.
- In 2017-18, the university provided 88 percent of the \$2,924 annual premium cost to 2,118 graduate students.
 - The 88 percent subsidy matches the university's share of other employee health insurance programs.
- Graduate students may decline coverage.

Historical Graduate Healthcare Trends 2001-2018

Annual Premium for Graduate Health Insurance



Annual Student and University Cost for Graduate Health Insurance



*Projected **Estimated for 2018-19



Proposed Graduate Assistant Compensation Plan for 2018-19

1. Advance the stipend scale for 2018-19 by implementing a 2.0 percent increase.
 - This is congruent with planned faculty merit program
 - Effective November 25, 2018, but smoothed across entire year.
2. Continue the university share of graduate assistant health insurance coverage of 88 percent.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the graduate assistant compensation program for 2018-19 be approved.

March 25, 2018

Discussion